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The role of eye dominance and stroke alignment in aiming

The role of eye dominance in aiming has been the subject of numerous articles and much discussion. Perhaps as a result, it is one of the more over used and misunderstood excuses for a pool player's inability to consistently make a shot.

It is not my intention to argue that eye dominance is irrelevant. On the contrary, it is a valuable piece of information when placed in the context of the entire stroke process. However, in and of itself, it is often used as a scapegoat for a myriad of other issues involving alignment and stroke mechanics.

For the most part, right handed people are right eye dominant and left handed people are left eye dominant. Eye dominance is simply the preference of visual input of one eye over the other. It is much like the right handed person favoring his or her right hand in both strength and dexterity. A certain percentage of the population, however, has cross-dominant traits. A right handed person may be left eye dominant and, conversely, a left handed person may be right eye dominant.

How can you tell if you are right or left eye dominant? There is a simple test that does not require expensive equipment or specialized training. Pick out an object in the room. Make a circle with your hand as depicted in the photograph below and hold your hand about 18

inches away from your face so that you can see the object through the circle with both eyes open.



Keeping your head and hand in the same location, close one eye and then the other. If you close your left eye and can still see the object in the circle with your right eye, then you are right eye dominant. If you close your right eye and can still see the object in the circle with your left eye then you are left eye dominant.

If you discover that your dominant eye is on the same side of your body as your dominant hand then you are no longer entitled to use the dominant eye excuse. You may find another excuse for your bad hits. There are plenty available.

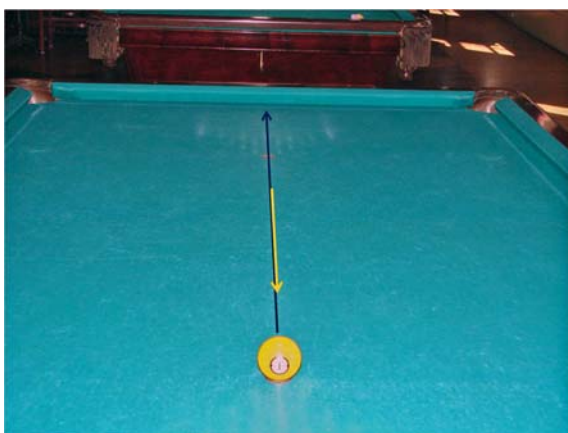
What does it mean if you discover that you are right handed and left eye dominant or left handed with right eye dominance? The simple answer is that you face the same issue as any player of a cue sport, regardless of eye dominance. You must find a way to drive the cue in a straight line along your line of sight. You see the target with your eyes but you aim the cue at the target using body alignment.

Like a tripod there are three fixed points of balance in your basic stroke position. These three points consists of your bridge hand and your two feet. Your bridge hand rests on the table and your feet must

be positioned so as to line up your upper torso, as naturally as possible, with your line of aim. With the proper alignment your cue will travel in a straight line directed along your line of sight.

To find the proper alignment you should first determine if your head is in a straight vertical position. Having your head tilted is the first sign that your stance is incorrect, causing you to twist your upper torso. Once you have verified that your head is perfectly vertical you must find a comfortable stroke position for your head in relation to the cue. Most players prefer placing their chin directly over their cue. However many players, particularly with cross eye dominance, have better results positioning their head with their dominant eye over the cue during their stroke.

Once you have resolved any issues surrounding head positioning, you must determine whether or not your alignment is correct. The following simple drill can be used both as a diagnostic tool and as a means to correct and practice proper alignment.

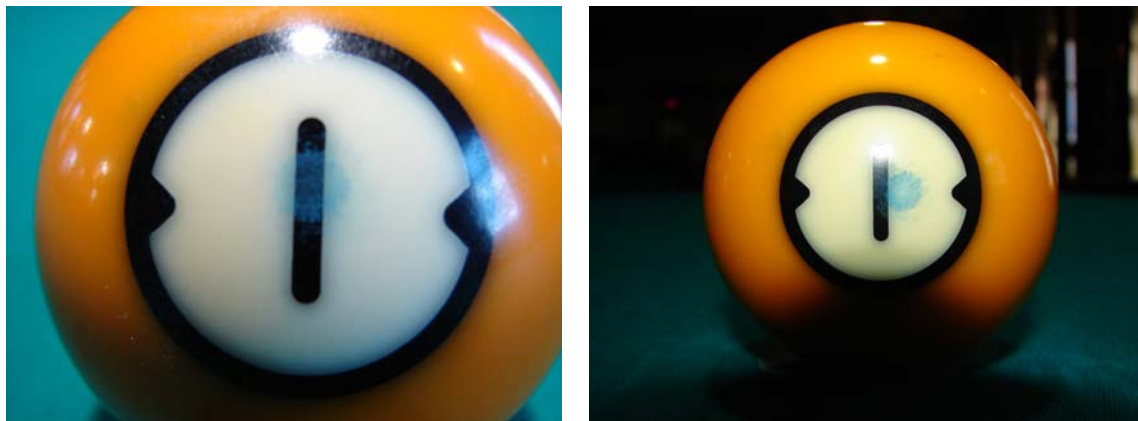


Place the one ball on the head spot. Be sure to have the number 1 facing you and positioned in a straight vertical direction. The number 1 now defines the vertical axis of the ball. Approach the one ball, treating

it as a cue ball, and attempt to strike it on its vertical axis sending it through the foot spot. If you are properly aligned, the one ball will travel through the foot spot and return straight back through the head spot.

Make sure that your head is positioned properly. If you are right handed begin with your right foot positioned under the butt of your cue. Left handed players should place their left foot under the butt of their cue. Make sure that you chalk the tip of your cue before every shot.

After each shot take a look at the one ball. Each hit will leave a chalk mark on the one ball.



Take a close look at the photos depicted above. The one ball on the left was struck directly on its vertical axis. The one ball on the right was not. If you are strike the one ball on its vertical axis and it returns to the head spot you have found your proper alignment. If you strike the one ball to the right or left of the number 1, then you are out of alignment and it is unlikely that the ball will travel through the foot spot or return to the head spot.

To adjust your alignment, repeat the drill while experimenting with the position of your bridge and stance. Small movements in your stance will result in a corresponding shift in the travel direction of your cue. With some patience and experimentation, you will be able to attain alignment with your line of aim. The cue will travel in the direction of your sighted target.

Eye dominance is a matter of genetics. You are born with an ocular preference. It can not be learned and it does not appear mysteriously in the middle of your league or tournament session. If your game is stagnant or if you can make shots but are inconsistent then it is more likely that you are experiencing alignment or stroke mechanic issues.